

VZCZCXYZ0001
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHNR #0024/01 0061343
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 061343Z JAN 09
FM AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 8144
INFO RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 0384
RUEHDJ/AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI 5515
RUEHDR/AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM 6293
RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA 3122
RUEHKH/AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM 2276

UNCLAS NAIROBI 000024

DEPT FOR AF/PPD ANYASO, EHRNMAN, WHITMAN, KELLEY; ECA/PE/C/CU
BARROSSE; IIP/SV BANDLER

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958:N/A
TAGS: [OEXC](#) [SCUL](#) [KPAO](#)

SUBJECT: Cultural Programs Keep Embassy Nairobi Busy in 1st Qtr

1) Summary. Embassy Nairobi's Public Affairs Section began the new fiscal year with robust programming, despite fiscal constraints and intense planning for the huge embassy November elections program. Programming touched on multiple genres - dance, music, education, film, cultural preservation, press workshops, and more - and reached a wide audience, with a large concentration on youth. The seemingly "soft" programming supported major post priorities including counterterrorism; transparent, accountable democratic institutions; education and health; and mutual understanding with a special focus on youth audiences. Virtually all the cultural events received wide media coverage in TV, radio, and print media. While our efforts have helped extend our reach this quarter, we have done so with human rather than fiscal resources. If future funding does not meet our human expenditure we will be forced to rein in our programming in the very near term. End summary.

DIALOGUE AND DEMONSTRATIONS OF DEMOCRACY - 6,000+ REACHED

2) Leading up to the elections, PAS organized an outreach program that sent Mission staff from several agencies and departments to high schools, universities, civil society, and institutions around the country to engaging Kenyan students and professionals (including USG exchange program alumni) in discussions about the U.S. elections. Mission personnel spent 2-3 hours on each visit answering questions, listening to opinions and challenging misconceptions about American society and democracy through the unique lens of the Obama campaign. Coordinated by the Information Resource Center (IRC) team, officers reached over 6,000 young people in this first-ever, embassy-wide public diplomacy effort.

3) Embassy elections outreach culminated in an audience of thousands of students, educators, businesspeople, government representatives, foreign diplomats, and more crowding the Ambassador's residence from 5 a.m. to watch the historic election returns on numerous big screens. A PAS-driven mission-wide effort, the elections program was a bubble of activity: several big TV screens broadcast live returns, aired IIP DVDs about the candidates and pre-recorded campaign debates; students took part in interactive webchats and webcasts on special workstations; embassy staff used a huge electoral map to explain the process as it unfolded; and hundreds of voters (all Kenyan) waited in line to cast their ballots in two authentic-looking voting booths. Over 500 voters, including many of the students, Nobel Prize laureate Wangari Maathai, Cabinet ministers and others cast their ballots in our straw vote, almost unanimously for their "native son," reflecting the general euphoria that "one of their own" would be President. This entire al fresco classroom on democracy at work was in stark contrast to the violence that had erupted following Kenya's controversial elections in 2007.

HUMANITY IN HARMONY: COUNTERING TERRORISM THROUGH ARTS

4) On October 25, Embassy Nairobi sponsored local arts center Paa Ya Paa's 7th annual Daniel Pearl World Music Days celebration. This year the Embassy encouraged Paa Ya Paa to broaden its guest list and artist participation, which resulted in a magnificent display of music and art. Over 250 people showed up to watch several bands, a child trumpeter, poets, and dancers perform in celebration of "harmony for humanity." Guests also enjoyed an art exhibition inspired by the theme. Two days later, Paa Ya Paa showed the film "A Mighty Heart," that recounts the story of Daniel Pearl's life and death. PAO and CAO were interviewed on two different radio stations, and two TV stations covered the event on their arts magazines, citing the need to overcome the hatred that caused Daniel Pearl's death and out mutual and worldwide efforts to find harmony in our diverse cultures and beliefs.

AMERICAN CULTURE COMES ALIVE THROUGH MUSIC, DANCE

5) From November 13 to 20 the U.S. Air Force Central Expeditionary Band, "Dune," entertained thousands of Kenyans of all ages throughout Nairobi and in several nearby towns, earning rave reviews from all who had this rare opportunity. Ambassador Ranneberger hosted an eclectic mix of embassy contacts, including several young artists and performers from Nairobi's slums. In a gesture of friendship and mutual understanding, Dune shared the stage with the Kenyan Army Band for a few numbers, and a local Kenyan artist sang Tina Turner's "Respect," as the crowd got to its feet and danced the night away. The band then went on tour playing for: 300 students in Machakos, a town south of Nairobi; 200 students at Kenyatta University in Nairobi; 200 slum youngsters at a youth program in downtown Nairobi; and to over 1,200 students at Egerton University in Nakuru in the Rift Valley. Two band members and the CAO took full advantage of interviews on the Kenyatta U student radio station to explain America's interest in engaging with Kenyans on a variety of levels to advance mutual understanding and friendship.

6) From October 25 to 29, three solo contemporary dancers engaged Kenyan dancers in a series of workshops that took place at two major arts centers in Nairobi. Anna Glass, Brooklyn's 651 Arts Manager, accompanied the group and facilitated a conversation with 40 artists about contemporary dance, arts management, and international opportunities for artists. The four-day program culminated in a performance where American and Kenyan artists shared the stage for performance and post-performance discussion. Embassy Nairobi is grateful for ECA's Performing Arts Initiative (PAI) grant that enabled this excellent program to take place in Tanzania and Kenya this year. Anna Glass was featured prominently in a local daily article, and many artists felt the Embassy's presence and interest in Kenya's dance scene.

FIGHTING AIDS

7) On December 1, World AIDS Day, the U.S. Embassy supported the first Kenyan screening of "A Grandmother's Tribe," a film that documents the plight of aging Kenyan grandmothers forced to raising their grandchildren orphaned by the deaths of the parents from AIDS. Through PEPFAR funding, the Embassy helped the filmmakers bring this moving documentary back to Kenya, premiering it first in a local movie theatre, and then back to where it was filmed, in Kibera, Kenya's largest slum, and Mudoba Village in western Kenya. Over 3,000 people attended the screenings, which received excellent print coverage. Private TV station Citizen broadcast the film on national television on Christmas day. The Ambassador, PEPFAR Director, and CAO were interviewed for a follow-on feature length film due to come out next year.

ACADEMIC OUTREACH

8) With our new Alumni Coordinator on board as of September,

Embassy alumni programming has increased exponentially! Events kicked off with a Humphrey-Fulbright Alumni Association reception in September, where over 30 people gathered, many for their first ever alumni event. In October, over 30 alumni gathered for a lively pre-U.S. presidential elections panel discussion. On November 19, Fulbright alumni at Kenyatta University launched an alumni chapter, and in early December, Fulbright alumni on the coast gathered in Mombasa to discuss opening their own chapter. In every case, there was a dynamic mix of young and older alumni sharing their experiences and looking for more opportunities to engage with the Embassy and with their colleagues for the Embassy.

9) On November 24, Education USA's Educational Advisor, Mari Nelson organized an International Education Week program at the International School of Kenya. Students from a school in the Mathare slum joined international students to listen to Kenyan and American music performed by a local choir and a band from the coast. They also took part in the open-ended discussion of the value of a U.S. education, in which students were encouraged to use the Education USA services to look into the possibilities of studying in the U.S.

10) Meanwhile, U.S. Fulbright scholars and researchers trickled in from August through December, with a few more scheduled to arrive in the New Year. The CAO hosted American Fulbrighters at her home in November for an opportunity to share experiences and challenges.

NURTURING CULTURE: ENVOYS, GRANTS, AND MEDIA OUTREACH

11) One would assume that culture is natural to all societies but highlighting and preserving it sometimes takes a little more time, money and effort. Robert Bangiola worked for a month with the staff of the Trust for African Rock Art (TARA) helping develop their potential as purveyors of a specific part of Kenyan culture. A sensitive, engaging personality, Bob immersed himself in TARA and the great Kenyan cultural community to ensure that his counsel was context specific. Offline, Bob made consulted with other arts centers in Nairobi and with the CAO, sharing advice and suggestions on how better to manage arts organizations in Kenya. Bob's impact was felt beyond TARA, and his easy manner and giving nature furthered USG interests for promoting mutual understanding in Kenya. Embassy Nairobi is grateful for the ECA Cultural Envoy program, which enabled us to expand our engagement with the art world and put it on an even more solid foundation for future activities.

12) On the last day of the 8th Annual Lamu Cultural Festival, which PAS continues to fund, Ambassador Ranneberger presented Kenya's National Museums chairman with a \$47,241 Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation (AFCP) grant in a ceremony at the Lamu Museum. Nicely complementing the festival's commitment to preserving Swahili culture, the grant will be used to rehabilitate the Lamu Museum building and preserve archaic handwritten Swahili texts. Both print and broadcast media covered the event.

13) On December 11 the Embassy press section hosted 13 journalists who often cover cultural programming for a luncheon-workshop with former AP reporter Susan Linee, who led the journalists in a discussion about the challenges they face in reporting on cultural programs. Cultural events, especially in remote areas, get short shrift from editors and reporters are often only paid for their time and work IF the editor sees fit to use it. The journalists discussed strategies for dealing with editors and discussed the importance of treating cultural stories as any other: citing the five "w's" and "h;" confirming facts, and finding an angle. Journalists were appreciative that embassy CAO attended, noting that for many this was the first time they had met an American cultural attache. Participants were enthusiastic about the workshop and very much appreciated the opportunity to come together to discuss challenges, frustrations, and strategies with a journalism expert and with each other.

INTERAGENCY EFFORTS TO COMBAT GENDER VIOLENCE

14) PAS, working together with USAID and the Department of Justice

(DOJ), led the Embassy's 16-day campaign against Gender-Based Violence. In Kenya, almost half of women, regardless of status or ethnicity, are the victims of physical, verbal, psychological, or sexual violence. During the 16-day period, Embassy Nairobi launched a series of programs that reached out to all spheres of professionals working on combating gender-based violence. On November 24, PAS hosted a seminar for twenty journalists with U.S. legal experts to sensitize the media to the issue and to encourage focused and responsible reporting. Two days later, the Embassy hosted a DVC connecting a Paris-based expert with Kenyan professionals to discuss prevention, best practices for education and outreach, treatment and recovery, and law enforcement. On December 9, PAS and LEGATT co-sponsored a workshop aimed at assisting the Kenyatta and Nairobi hospitals in their efforts to create "one-stop" abuse help centers. This was part of the Women's Justice and Empowerment program, which trains police and prosecutors on best practices in the areas of police response, forensics, pre-trial measures, and victim and witness protection. On December 6-8, PAS placed an Ambassadorial op-ed on the need to combat gender-based violence in the top five Kenyan dailies.

FUNDING WOES, BUT OPTIMISM GROWS

Kenya is in the midst of a cultural renaissance, spurred not least by the 2007 post-election violence, which opened up new avenues for artistic expression. The possibilities to engage artists, performers, educators, students, journalists, and others on virtually all our priority themes are virtually limitless - with the sad proviso that we haven't the human and, especially, fiscal resources to engage as we would like. We are will continue to make full use of ECA and IIP funds and resources to bring artists and speakers for programming throughout Kenya in the rest of the fiscal year. Our limitation, however, is a lack of post programming funds that may well stop our efforts in mid-stride. We have no money to fund local projects that would greatly enhance our relationship with both the youth and Muslim communities or even to send personnel outside the capital on programs such as a scheduled follow-up election/transition speakers tours. Our lack of an appropriate and accessible programming venue also cuts into our ability to bring prospective audiences to us. Nonetheless, we are committed to making the most of the funding we have and looking for creative ways to reach out to larger numbers of people in the next quarters.

RANNEBERGER